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TOM'S READY RALLIES TO WIN GRADE III ACK ACK AT CHURCHILL DOWNS; CHAMPION SPRINTER RUNHAPPY FADES TO FOURTH IN 4-YEAR-OLD DEBUT

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Saturday, Oct. 1, 2016) – Gayle and Tom Benson's 3-year-old **Tom's Ready** rallied from off the pace to beat **Iron Fist** by half-length in Saturday's 24th running of the \$100,000 Ack Ack Presented by TwinSpires.com (Grade III) at Churchill Downs and spoil the comeback of champion sprinter **Runhappy**.

Jim McIngvale's Runhappy, North America's champion sprinter, was sent off as the heavy 1-5 favorite for his first start of the year against five rivals in the one-mile race for 3-year-olds and up. The champ broke well under jockey **Edgar Prado** and alternated leads early with come-backing **Mr. Z** through fractions of :23.08 for the first quarter mile and :45.95 for the half. **Schivarelli** and **Iron Fist** were in close pursuit just behind the top two with Tom's Ready seven lengths off the pace after the initial four furlongs.

Runhappy had the lead at the top of the stretch but was overtaken by Schivarelli as Tom's Ready, ridden by **Brian Hernandez Jr.**, made his winning bid from the outside. The winner took command at the eighth pole, as Schivarelli and Runhappy weakened nearing the finish, and cleared those rivals before holding off a late bid from the grinding Iron Fist. Schivarelli finished third and Runhappy was off-the-board in fourth, 2 ½ lengths back of Tom's Ready, who carried 118 pounds – three pounds less than the rest of the field. **The Truth or Else** and Mr. Z completed the order of finish.

Trained by **Dallas Stewart**, Tom's Ready ran one mile over a "good" main track in 1:34.86. The first prize was \$61,380 and hiked his bankroll to \$640,267 with a record of 13-3-4-0.

The victory by Tom's Ready was no fluke. This summer, the 3-year-old son of More Than Ready was the 1 ¼-length winner of Belmont Park's \$500,000 Woody Stephens (GII) over seven furlongs, and was runner-up in the Lecomte (GIII) and Louisiana Derby (GII) before finishing 12th in this year's Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI).

"We thought that if we could beat Runhappy, today was the day and our horse ran his race," Hernandez said. "They didn't go all that fast up front and he ran after them and ran them down his own way and proved to be the best horse today. I was pretty confident the whole way. I was sitting back behind them and I know they didn't feel like they weren't going all that fast but knowing my little horse and watching him run in the race he did at Belmont, I thought when I called on him that he would be able to give me that kind of run and he did."

The Bensons, who own the NFL's **New Orleans Saints**, were on hand to witness the stakes triumph.

"I knew he could do it," Tom Benson said. "I tell you, that's a great horse. You saw him come up, he was dead last and he shook off."

Dallas Stewart wasn't present, however, because he was busy saddling **Charles Fipke's** 4-year-old filly **Forever Unbridled** to a 2 ¼-length triumph in the \$400,000 Beldame (GI) at Belmont Park. He did manage to watch the Ack Ack on TV at the barn.

"We can't win no football games, but we can win a horse race," Stewart quipped in regards to his beloved Saints, who've started the season 0-3. "He ran big. It couldn't have worked out any better. Everybody was worried about Runhappy and some other real tough horses in here but I said, 'Hey listen, the horse is focused up.'"

Stewart says the \$1 million Las Vegas Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (GI) at Santa Anita on Nov. 4 is Tom's Ready's next target. Two of the last three Ack Ack winners – **Pants On Fire** (2013) and **Tapiture** (2015) – used the race as a springboard to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, as well.

As for Runhappy, it's unclear what's next. He, too, was hoping to run in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.

"We'll talk about it and see," trainer **Laura Wohlers** said. "Hopefully, but we'll stop and see. I'm disappointed he didn't win the race, especially when he's such a favorite but it's alright, he'll do okay. As long as he comes out of the race okay, we'll be fine. We'll live to race another day."

Tom's Ready, a Pennsylvania-bred out of the Broad Brush mare Goodbye Stranger, returned \$11.80, \$5.20 and \$6.40 to his backers as the 9-2 second betting choice. Iron Fist, with **Robby Albarado** up paid \$6.40 and \$12.40. Schivarelli, ridden by **Corey Lanerie**, paid \$18.

The Ack Ack Handicap honors the 1971 Horse of the Year Ack Ack, who won the 1969 Derby Trial at Churchill Downs in 1:34.40 which was a track record for one mile that has since been eclipsed.

NOBLE BIRD WIRES FIELD IN \$175,000 LUKAS CLASSIC

John C. Oxley's Noble Bird took charge of the pace and never looked back taking Saturday's fourth running of the \$175,000 Lukas Classic (Listed) at Churchill Downs in walk-the-dog fashion under jockey **Julien Leparoux**.

The son of **Birdstone** covered the 1 1/8 miles in 1:49.03 earning himself his second stakes victory under the Twin Spires. His first triumph came in last year's edition of the \$500,000 Stephen Foster Handicap (Grade I).

Noble Bird broke on top leading a slow first quarter-mile in :24.02, and a half-mile in :48.01, with this year's Foster 'Cap victor **Bradester** sitting not too far behind in second. At the top of the stretch Bradester loomed dangerously and made a bid in the late stages, but Noble Bird was able to keep him at bay and held off a late charge from eventual runner-up **Hawaakom** to take the Lukas Classic by 1 1/2 lengths. Bradester faded to third.

The victory was worth \$104,160 which increased the 5-year-old's earnings to \$944,945 with a record of 18-6-4-0. The Lukas Classic was Noble Bird's first trip to the winner's circle since an eye-popping 11 1/4-length triumph in the Pimlico Special (GIII) on May 20, which also was won in wire-to-wire fashion.

Noble Bird, a chestnut horse born on April 6, 2011, is a son of Birdstone out of the **Tiznow** mare **Anyhow** and was bred in Kentucky by **Jack Swain**.

Noble Bird rewarded his backers with payoffs of \$7.40, \$5 and \$3.20 at odds of 5-2 in the field of nine older horses. Hawaakom returned \$10 and \$5 with Bradester finishing back in third and paid \$3.80 to show.

Fear the Cowboy, **Honorable Duty**, **Rocket Time**, **Bullards Alley**, **Breaking Lucky** and **Natchez** completed the order of finish.

Earlier on the card, **L.T.B. Inc. and Hillerich Racing LLC's One Mean Man** prevailed in the 40th running of the \$100,000 Jefferson Cup (listed) for 3-year-olds, which was taken off the turf and run over dirt because of inclement weather.

Ridden by **Robby Albarado** and trained by **Bernie Flint**, One Mean Man stalked the early pace and defeated **Zapperini** by 1 1/2 lengths and clocked 1 1/8 miles in 1:50.23. Albarado holds the Jefferson Cup record with five wins in the race.

One Mean Man won for the sixth time in 16 starts and the \$62,000 winner's share jumped the Mizzen Mast colt's earnings to \$418,597. The Jefferson Cup was his second straight stakes victories. Previously, the Kentucky-bred won the \$200,000 Mystic Lake Derby at Canterbury Park on Aug. 27.

He paid \$5.20, \$3 and \$2.20 as the 8-5 favorite in the compact field that was reduced to five after five late scratches.

Racing resumes Sunday at Churchill Downs for closing day of the 11-day September. The first of 10 races is 12:45 p.m. and there's a \$64,595 carryover in the Single 6 Jackpot, which has a mandatory payout because of the meet's conclusion. The six-race sequence will cover Races 5-10 starting at 2:45 p.m.

ACK ACK QUOTES

TOM BENSON, co-owner of TOM'S READY (winner): "I knew he could do it. I tell you, that's a great horse. You saw him come up, he was dead last and he shook off."

DALLAS STEWART, trainer of TOM'S READY (winner): "We (New Orleans Saints) can't win no football games, but we can win a horse race! He ran big. It couldn't have worked out any better. Hopefully it's a nice stepping stone to the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile. He's been solid all year. He hadn't had too many bad races. The race at Saratoga just didn't set up for him but he's trained well coming out of it. We told Mr. Benson no need to be afraid. Everybody was worried about Runhappy and some other real tough horses in here but I said, 'Hey listen, the horse is focused up,' We thought about bringing him to New York but I crossed it off after the work at Churchill. I had never seen him work any better so I said, 'We need to run him right here.'"

BRIAN HERNANDEZ, JR., jockey of TOM'S READY (winner): "We thought that if we could beat Runhappy, today was the day and our horse ran his race. They didn't go all that fast up front and he ran after them and ran them down his own way and proved to be the best horse today. I was pretty confident the whole way. I was sitting back behind them and I know they didn't feel like they weren't going all that fast but knowing my little horse and watching him run in the race he did at Belmont, I thought when I called on him that he would be able to give me that kind of run and he did."

EDGAR PRADO, jockey of RUNHAPPY (fourth as 1-5 beaten favorite): "He was going nice and easy on the lead and was sitting very comfortable. He was able to rate in the Breeders' Cup last year so we did a little of that. He was comfortable but we just couldn't get it done in that last part."

LAURA WOHLERS, trainer of RUNHAPPY (fourth as 1-5 beaten favorite): "I'm disappointed he didn't win the race, especially when he's such a favorite but it's alright, he'll do okay. As long as he comes out of the race okay, we'll be fine. We'll live to race another day."

Q: Is the Breeders' Cup still an option? "We'll talk about it and see. Hopefully, but we'll stop and see."

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LUKAS CLASSIC QUOTES

DAVID CARROLL, assistant trainer of NOBLE BIRD (winner): “All credit goes to **Norman (Casse)** and the team up at Saratoga. They sent him in here a few days ago. He’s an old campaigner and was really on his game today. I was just a little concerned leaving the gate. He might have gotten squeezed back a little bit, but he got through and after that he was plain sailing. (Jockey) **Julien (Leparoux)** knows the horse. This is his home track but we’re delighted with the performance and we’re very happy for (Owner) Mr. **(John) Oxley** and the whole team.”

JULIEN LEPAROUX, jockey of NOBLE BIRD (winner): “He loves the track; this is his home. (Jockey) **Corey (Lanerie)** and **Bradester** out broke us so we were clear. He came over on us a little so it was clear that’s his right to do that. Lucky enough I could find a spot to kind of be in the clear with Noble Bird and he relaxed beautifully on the lead – that’s the key with him.”

MIGUEL MENA, jockey of HAWAAKOM (runner-up): “The horse was doing well he was sitting on a big race. He worked out a nice trip on the inside and he ran hard.”

JEFFERSON CUP QUOTES

BERNIE FLINT, trainer of ONE MEAN MAN (winner): “He’s absolutely sound, he runs with no medication other than Lasix and he carries his track in his back pocket. He’s a good horse. I’m fortunate enough to get him but this horse, but this late in my life makes it kind of hard, but this colt is a good horse and he’d be good for anybody if they trained him because he needs absolutely nothing; he’s automatic. He ships well and he goes out of town to any track, anywhere. I wasn’t worried about Churchill Downs because it drains so well here. What I was worried about was it being a muddy mess and when I came out and saw it was good I knew it would be fast by this afternoon. These are good horses. You can’t sell any horses at this racetrack short. These are real good animals here and he happens to be a good one. It’s not because of me, it’s because he is a good horse and he doesn’t carry his company around with him. I said, ‘We’re here, it’s a short field, I like the track, he breezed on it all time, let’s go,’ so we went. I guess we’ll run on the dirt some more.”

ROBBY ALBARADO, jockey of ONE MEAN MAN (winner): “I’ve had the opportunity to ride some good horses and that’s what it’s all about. I think he’s versatile. These off-the-grass races kind of fall apart a little bit when you lose some of those true grass horses. Having said that we still had some nice ones in here. Take nothing away from my horse, or my field. It was a good race.”

COREY LANERIE, jockey of ZAPPERINI (runner-up): “I had everything my way just sitting outside of (Barahona). They got to go slow, I thought. Turning for home, we punched on he was just second best.”

Churchill Downs, the world’s most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America’s greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 143rd running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on May 6, 2017. The track will conduct two more live racing meets in 2016: the September Meet (Sept. 16-Oct. 2) and the Fall Meet (Oct. 30-Nov. 27). Churchill Downs has hosted the Breeders’ Cup World Championships eight times and the event will return to the track in 2018. Information is available at www.ChurchillDowns.com.

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